

OUR PUBLIC-SCHOOL SYSTEM: SCHOOLS OF BUFFALO AND CINCINNATI.

IN the October number of the FORUM I discussed the general features of our Public-School System, also the Public Schools of Baltimore.

In regard to the American schools in general, I stated that the schools of different localities were very unequal, so much so that while those of some cities had already advanced considerably, those of others were still far behind the age. I attributed this variation largely to the varying degree of excellence in supervision, for the reason that I had discovered during my visits to the schools of thirty-six American cities that, with few exceptions, the schools had advanced directly in proportion to what had been done by the superintendents toward raising the standard of the teachers in their charge. And this circumstance I explained by the fact that licenses to teach are, in the vast majority of instances, granted to persons whose education, both general and pedagogical, is far too limited to enable them to develop the minds of children upon scientific principles,¹ that consequently the vast majority of teachers are still sorely in need of training when they receive their licenses to teach, and that the duty of training them, after being regularly appointed as teachers, devolves upon the superintendent and his assistants.

In relation to the ultimate causes of the varying degree of excellence of the schools I stated in substance the following:

First, the citizens in many cities are utterly indifferent to the affairs of the schools, and, as a result, the school officials are not everywhere sufficiently urged to advance the educational institutions in their charge. Secondly, boards of education in this country are

¹ "Not more than a small percentage of persons engaged in teaching in the public schools of this country are normal-school graduates. Of those teaching (besides the normal-school graduates) some are high-school graduates, others have simply attended a normal school, high school, or academy for one or more terms, while a very large number of licenses to teach are granted to those whose education does not extend beyond that received at a grammar school, with or without a little extra coaching."—*October Forum*, page 151.

composed of laymen who cannot be expected to know the needs of the schools, and consequently the condition of the schools will depend to a not inconsiderable extent upon whether or not fortune favors them in the selection of a superintendent. Thirdly, in the larger cities a false system of economy is too frequently exercised, as is evidenced by the fact that the number of assistant-superintendents is too small to supervise properly a large corps of teachers. Lastly, the most potent of all causes—politics. When a school system is but a part of the whole municipal machinery—and this is not infrequently the case—the board of education is composed largely of politicians who seek the office of member of the school board for no other reason than that of patronage. Under these circumstances the tendency exists to select superintendents who are willing to follow blindly the dictates of the board, rather than those who, having the welfare of the children at heart, would consent to nothing which might have an unfavorable influence on the schools; in other words, political boards of education have the tendency to select *tools* rather than educational leaders. And where merit is of secondary importance in the selection of superintendents, the same is true in regard to the teachers, those having the most “pull” receiving the earliest and best appointments. And there is nothing which so hampers the work of a superintendent as a school system riddled with incompetent teachers.

In regard to Baltimore, I remarked that I had found the instruction in the public schools of that city extremely unscientific, and a description was given of some of the class-room work to show my reasons for such criticism. I also pointed out the fact that the unfavorable condition of the Baltimore schools was caused by inadequate supervision, untrained teachers, and politics in the Board of Education. In the present article, which will be devoted to the public schools of Buffalo and Cincinnati, I shall again point out the connection between unscientific instruction and inadequate supervision. And, for the study of the baneful influence which politics exert upon the schools, I know of no city that affords so much opportunity as Buffalo. In my next article I shall begin to show the bright side of American education.

The public schools of Buffalo and Cincinnati, like those of Baltimore, belong, in my opinion, to the mechanical order of schools. By mechanical schools I mean those whose aim is to cram the minds of children with words without regard to the things which they repre-

sent, with abstract ideas without regard to the concrete, and where the instruction appeals to the mechanical memory rather than to the reasoning faculties.

Whether in the present era mechanical instruction be justifiable, that is, whether a teacher be justified in ignoring all that has been done by educational scientists toward placing education upon a rational basis, may be a matter of opinion. But it is certainly not proper for school officials to condemn strongly all that pertains to the mechanical and to indorse warmly the views of educational scientists, and then to convey to the public the impression that they practise in their schools what they preach outside of them, when in truth the schools in their charge are pervaded with just those things which they condemn, while those which they commend cannot be found in them. A striking instance of this nature may be found at Buffalo, and, in order to illustrate my meaning, I shall compare what the superintendent of schools of that city remarks in his annual report of 1889-90, in regard to what schools should do and what they should not do, with the instruction as I found it in the schools in his charge.

The following are extracts from that report:

"In bringing into our present system of instruction the innumerable material objects and the tools with which manual training works out its processes, we must note a strict adherence to the universally accepted psychological law that the concrete should precede the abstract. It goes without saying that a pupil's conception of an idea, embodied in a tangible form, will be infinitely clearer than that of one who tries to grasp it by means of a mere word-picture of it. . . . For youthful minds, any system of education that deals almost wholly with abstractions is not so well adapted to the purposes of a mental discipline as one which employs the lucid and attractive methods of experimental philosophy, as evinced in the working of concrete substances."—*Page 107.*

Following these are words to the effect that there is a tendency on the part of the school to make automatons of children, that there is a necessity of breaking up the extreme uniformity, and that we "must have some regard for the differing assimilative powers of the young and precious minds committed to our charge."

"On every side we see unmistakable evidences of a new adaptation of means to ends, and it would augur ill for the conceded" (by whom conceded?) "advancement of our own school department, were we content to labor with methods and materials that have long since been relegated to a merited obscurity, to make way for new, easier and more successful means of instruction."—*Page 103.*

"—my desire to keep the school department of our city abreast of the foremost in the race for supremacy."—*Page 102.*

These remarks indicate that the superintendent of schools of Buffalo desires to convey two distinct impressions: First, that he is among those who favor natural development—teaching upon psychological principles—and that he is strongly opposed to all methods which savor of the mechanical. Secondly, that in all things short of manual training, the teaching in the public schools of Buffalo is not only conducted upon psychological principles, but that natural teaching had nowhere reached a higher stage of development than in the schools of that city, and consequently that no schools had done more than these toward discarding “methods and materials that have long since been relegated to a merited obscurity.” How otherwise can we construe the words “my desire to keep the school department of our city abreast of the foremost in the race for supremacy”?

I shall now describe some of the teaching that I witnessed in the public schools of Buffalo, in order to give the reader an opportunity to judge for himself how well the claim of superiority bears the test of actual investigation.¹

In a school which has the reputation of being one of the best in the city, I attended two lessons in geography, one in the fourth and the other in the sixth grade, which on account of their peculiar nature should not be passed by unnoticed.

First, the fourth-grade lesson. This lesson was divided into two parts, a written and an oral. During the written part, the children wrote upon their slates the answers to map-questions, which the teacher read to them from the text-book in the order in which they were printed. After some twenty questions had been asked and answered in this manner, the teacher said: “That will do for the present; now let us see how many missed.” She then told the class the correct answers, and while she did so the children looked at their slates in order to see how many misses they had made. When all the answers had been given the teacher inquired, “How many had all right? How many missed one? How many missed two?” etc., etc.

This process completed, the teacher remarked: “Now we will have that lesson orally, and let us see how many will miss.”

During the written lesson nothing worth speaking of was done

¹ I beg to call the attention of the reader to the fact that as I visited the schools of Buffalo very soon after the new superintendent entered upon the duties of his office, he was in no way responsible for the condition of the schools at the time, and that consequently my remarks are not intended to reflect upon him.

besides that which I have mentioned. In the oral part the same questions were asked as in the written part, the only difference between the oral and the written lesson being that in the one the answers were spoken, while in the other they were written.

In the sixth grade the subject of the lesson was California. During this recitation no text-book was used by the teacher. The teacher opened the lesson with the question, "How long does it take to go to California?" Then correcting herself, she said, "No, tell me first why you would like to go to California," though no one had expressed any particular desire to go there.

"I should like to take a drive around the mountains," answered one of the children.

"I should like to see the Golden Gate," said another.

This answer was followed by a cry of "chestnuts," from one of the boys. This remark did not, however, attract the attention of the teacher. In fact, during the entire lesson there was a complete absence of discipline.

After the children had given their reasons for desiring to go to California, the teacher remarked, "Now tell me how long it takes to go there."

In reply to this all sorts of guesses were made, the lowest being five days and the highest seven weeks.

At last a little girl said: "I know. My mamma went to California last winter. She started on a Thursday evening——"

This manner of solving the problem did not, however, appear to meet with unanimous approval, as the child's remarks were cut short by a cry of "Come off."

Unfortunately, to the teacher herself, the whole subject of California appeared to be involved in as deep a mystery as the language of the Hindoos. Indeed, the children appeared to do more toward the enlightenment of the teacher than the latter did to enlighten them. Nevertheless, she finally put an end to the agonizing suspense by saying, "I think it would take about a week."

"Through what cities would you pass in travelling from Buffalo to California?" was the next question.

"Chicago," said one of the children.

"Let me see," the teacher remarked, as she walked to the wall map, to verify the answer. When other cities were mentioned, she did the same thing.

"What can you tell me about San Francisco?" she asked later.

"It is the largest city in California," a pupil replied.

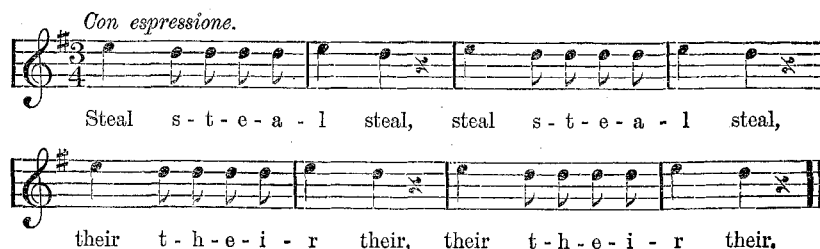
"It is one of the largest, but I don't know that it is the largest," said the teacher.

This ridiculous recitation was closed with the reading of an extract from an article on California which one of the children had found in an encyclopædia.

In one of the other schools that I visited the pedagogical absurdities were numerous, but in describing the work which I observed there, I shall, for the purpose of economizing space, confine my remarks to the curiosities which I found in one of the lower grades.

The first thing I heard in that room was a spelling-lesson. The teacher informed me that it was to be a new lesson, and that I should therefore have the opportunity to learn her method of teaching spelling. The teacher announced the lesson by telling the children to turn to a certain page in their reading-books.

When all the little ones were ready, they began to spell in concert, and continued doing so, until the list of words on that page was completed. Each word was spelled twice in succession and in a sing-song so marked that it resulted in a well-defined melody. As the effect cannot be reproduced in words alone, I shall give the music, as well as the words. The words "steal" and "their," for example, were sung as follows:



When the children had sung all the words in the list, they were told to spell them once more. They then repeated the whole process.

After the words had been spelled in this manner for the second time, the lesson took a new turn. The children were now told to close their books, and when this had been done the teacher heard them spell individually the words that they had just studied in concert. When all the words had been spelled by the children individually, I expected to hear another subject announced, but I learned to my utter amazement that the pupils were to be treated to a third course; for the teacher here remarked:

"We will now write the words."

This announcement was followed by a considerable amount of bustle and confusion on the part of the children, and order was not restored until slates, pencils, and rulers had been placed in position. When all was quiet, one of the pupils called out,

"I ain't got no ruler."

In answer to this the teacher, without correcting the child's language, said,

"You don't need a ruler. Do it the way you *done* it yesterday."

Then the words of the oft-repeated list were slowly dictated by the teacher. When the word "steal" was reached, she remarked:

"Spell the 'steal' you spelled this morning, not the 'steel' you spelled yesterday."

When the word "their" was reached, the teacher asked, "How do you spell 'their'?"

"T-h-e-i-r—their," sang the children.

"What kind of a 't' do you use in *their*?"

"Capital 't,'" one of the pupils answered.

"That's right," said the teacher.

One of the children here interposed:



sang another.

Here the teacher said to me, "They don't use capital letters regularly in this class; I only let them use capitals when they write proper names and proper *things*."

At last the spelling was over, and a lesson in arithmetic was begun. The first example the teacher gave them was the following:
 $6 - 2 + 4 = ?$

After the children had written this upon their slates, motions were made by them which indicated that they had had a considerable amount of experience in counting upon their fingers. One boy displayed quite an original method of calculating. He performed the example in this way: he made six strokes upon his slate, rubbed out

two of them, added four strokes to those remaining, and finished by counting the number of strokes then on his slate. It was all done with remarkable rapidity. When a number of examples had been performed the teacher said:

"Now I will give you one in subtraction. You know that's the kind you have to borrow in."

I visited a number of classes in this building, and before leaving it I saw things which convinced me that the pedagogical skill of other teachers employed there was not much above that displayed by the one whose work I have just described.

Space will not permit me to enter further into the detailed description of Buffalo's class-room work. Indeed, it were needless to do so, for, owing to the general uniformity of methods in vogue in the public schools of that city, their general characteristic features may be summed up in a few words. An exception here and there among seven hundred teachers does not alter the rule.

A subject on which much stress is laid and which may be regarded as standing, to a great extent, in the same relation to the schools of Buffalo as arithmetic does to those of Baltimore, is spelling. So much importance is attached to this subject that even the five-year-old children are taxed with spelling-lessons twenty to twenty-five minutes in duration. One of the teachers while speaking to me upon the subject said:

"I do wish we would return to the alphabet method of teaching reading, because those children who know their alphabet progress most rapidly in spelling."

Geography, a subject which, when treated scientifically, can not only be made very interesting, but can do much toward exercising the reasoning faculties, is taught by the "cramming" process, true instruction being substituted by mere lesson-hearing. Indeed, the scientific teaching of geography is an art, while the process of simply hearing children recite the geography lessons which they have studied can be undertaken by any one able to read. The methods employed in teaching technical grammar to the younger children are anything but modern. Reading is taught by the word method, a method which when used without the aid of phonics (as is the case at Buffalo) does less to develop mental power and more to waste time than any that I know of, excepting, *perhaps*, the alphabet method. Arithmetic is taught in an almost purely abstract manner from the very beginning. And even physics—which is studied in the highest grade—is

taught not by the experimental, but by the text-book method. In fact, taken all in all, I found very little in the public schools of Buffalo to indicate that in that city "methods and materials that have long since been relegated to a merited obscurity" had made way for "new, easier and more successful means of instruction." Indeed, I found but few cities where so little had been done toward lightening the burdens of the children—and particularly the younger ones—by discarding abstract and subjective in favor of objective and experimental methods.

The causes of the deplorable condition of the public schools of Buffalo are the same as those which were mentioned as leading to a similar condition of affairs at Baltimore, namely: politics, untrained teachers, and scanty supervision.

In regard to politics, the schools of Buffalo are even more deeply involved than those of Baltimore. In the latter city there is simply a close connection between schools and politics, while in Buffalo they are one. This is true not only of the Board of Education, but also of the superintendent and, to a great extent, the teachers.

That the Board of Education is a purely political body is evidenced by the fact that it is constituted by a *Committee of Seven of the Common Council*. As for the superintendent, he is elected directly by the people, and must, therefore, almost necessarily be a politician. And when we consider that the superintendent who is elected by the people has the sole power to appoint teachers, it becomes clear that political influence is liable to play a very important part in their appointment. Until recently matters were apparently still worse, as the superintendent had the sole power to examine as well as appoint teachers; and what is more, he had full power to regulate the character of the examination, without being restricted, as far as I can learn, to any fixed minimum. The result is that a large number of incompetent teachers have found their way into the schools of Buffalo; in fact, only a comparatively small number of Buffalo's teachers are normal-school graduates.

The supervision itself is of the scantiest, the City Superintendent being the only supervising officer, although there are seven hundred teachers in the system. What can a single person do toward raising the standard of seven hundred teachers? Were he to devote all his time and energy to this end he could accomplish but little, and how much less can he do when a portion of his time and energy must necessarily be spent in work connected with his office

from which the teacher can receive no direct benefit, and when another portion of his time and energy must be spent in "pulling wires" and otherwise working toward a re-election? When all these things are considered—supervision, office-work, and electioneering—we find that (speaking with mathematical accuracy) Buffalo has, for the purpose of supervising and raising the standard of seven hundred teachers, not even one, but only one-third of one superintendent.

An action was recently taken at Buffalo which it was believed would lead to the improvement of the schools; namely, a board was established for the purpose of examining candidates for teachers' positions and exercising a sort of general supervision over the schools. But there are a number of reasons why this board is liable to do as little toward raising the standard of the schools of Buffalo as a drop of water to swell the Atlantic Ocean. First, the board is composed of laymen, and consequently of persons not qualified to inquire into the true competency of a teacher, true competency depending upon a knowledge of just those things of which laymen are supposed to know nothing; namely, psychology and pedagogy, the sciences upon which scientific teaching is founded. Secondly, the board has not the power to examine candidates as it sees fit, but only to formulate questions within certain limits prescribed by the superintendent, who, as before, is privileged to make the standard as low as he chooses. Besides, this officer still retains the power to appoint teachers, the only restriction now laid upon him being that the appointments must be made from among those who passed the examination of the board with an average of seventy per cent or over, without, however, being obliged to regard the order of merit.

Under these circumstances I fail to perceive why the superintendent should not conduct the examinations as heretofore, the advantage derived by an examination of the board over one given by the superintendent being a mystery to me. It is true that an examination by the board will prevent cheating on the part of the superintendent. But it certainly reflects badly upon the city itself, if it feels the need of creating a board to watch a man who, above all others, should be scrupulously honest.

Besides, as has been pointed out, the quality of the schools does not depend nearly so much upon what the teachers know at the time of their appointment, as it does upon what is done toward educating them professionally after their appointment. It is true that the members of the Board of Examiners are obliged to exercise a general

supervision over the schools. But if they are expected to do anything toward raising the standard of the teachers, which is the true essence of supervision, then they are supposed, as laymen, to be able to instruct teachers in the science of education and the art of teaching, which but renders their position doubly absurd.

It follows that something much more radical must be done before the schools of Buffalo may be expected to improve to an appreciable extent. As the causes of the evils in Buffalo—politics, untrained teachers, and scanty supervision—are identical with those which were found at Baltimore, I can but suggest identical remedies for their eradication. To rid the schools of politics nothing but a complete reorganization of the whole school system will suffice, for the reason that at Buffalo they enter into every branch of the system. And to remedy the evils arising from incompetent teachers, I know of but one thing that can be relied upon, namely, thorough supervision, that is, supervision the object of which is to raise the standard of the teachers by instructing them in the theory of education and in practical teaching. For this purpose a supervisory staff of five or six educational experts, who would direct all their time and energies toward giving the teachers their much-needed training, would be essential. The present superintendent, as I learned during a conversation with him, favors efficient supervision, and if he receives the support of the citizens in carrying out his plans in this direction, there is no doubt that before many years elapse the schools of Buffalo will have scored a material advance.

The schools of Cincinnati are, in my opinion, upon much the same level as those of Baltimore and Buffalo, as little having been done here as in the other two cities toward substituting objective and experimental, for subjective, abstract, and mechanical methods of instruction. It is true that principals and teachers who endeavor to obtain results by more rational means may here and there be found, but this is no less true of Baltimore and Buffalo.

To review in detail the methods of instruction employed in the schools of Cincinnati would, therefore, be but to repeat in substance much of that which was mentioned while speaking of the schools of Baltimore and Buffalo. I have said all, generally speaking, when I remark that the schools of Cincinnati have as yet scarcely opened their doors to the "New Education."

But there are a number of things besides mechanical methods

which serve to render miserable the lives of the children attending the public schools of Cincinnati. The child requires air and sunshine, but many of the buildings are dark and gloomy, and in many of them the laws of health are otherwise ignored, the class-rooms being overcrowded and poorly ventilated. I found one room where the furniture was so closely packed that the children were literally obliged to squeeze their little bodies in between the desks and the backs of their benches, there being scarcely room enough for them to expand their lungs, much less to move about their limbs freely. In another room the seats were so arranged that a few of the children were obliged to sit very near a large stove. And, to cap the climax, corporal punishment still reigns supreme in the public schools of Cincinnati.

And yet we hear the Board sing its song of praise. We hear it congratulate itself upon its own magnificence, and the citizens of Cincinnati upon their good fortune in securing a board so wonderful and teachers so fine. The following extracts from the Report of the President of the Board of Education for the year ending August 31, 1891, published in the Sixty-second Annual Report of the Public Schools of Cincinnati, will show that this is no exaggeration. I reproduce the words here, believing that they will scarcely fail to interest the *careful* reader, if for no other reason than that they were written by one who is at the head of a public-school system.

"While we justly take credit to ourselves—that is, the Board—for our new buildings, and for the excellent financial condition of the Board, and for all those things that, but for which it might not be possible to accomplish the good we do, or be able to congratulate ourselves upon our great Public School system; yet after all is said and done—after all of the school-houses are built and all of the money necessary provided and spent—what would it all go for, what credit to any one, if the end to be served was not realized? What is that end? The education of the youth of our city. To learn, one must be taught or teach themselves. The child, being too young to educate itself, must be taught. To be taught, one must have a teacher, and there we are brought to the shrine before which the whole Public School system must bow—the work of the teacher. All the other matters are but incidental—are but the means to the end—to the crowning work of the teacher.

"When we consider the system, we look only for the results—we think not of the buildings occupied, not of the amount of money expended, not of the care exercised in its expenditure, not of the personnel of the Board of Education. We'll not be thought of in connection with the schools fifty years hence—not of the great financiers—all excellent and to be commended.

"It is not that the Building Committee shall be glorified and their names go down into coming time emblazoned on the front of the new buildings; it is not that the Committee on Funds and Claims shall wear the laurel wreath of the victor over the difficult financial questions; not that the Committee on Heating,

Fixtures, and Fuel shall properly make things warm. No, no, none of these things stand as representative of the system of public instruction ; but it is the result of the whole, and the one nearest that result is the one through whose direct efforts the result is reached ; *that one is the teacher*. We point to the graduate from our High Schools as the representative of our Public School system. He is the presumed embodiment of all that goes to make us the name we have. He is the result of the teachers' work. It is the teachers' work which makes the record ; which commands the praise ; which earns and is entitled to the highest appreciation. It is that which will live and benefit coming generations. The education of the youth, that is the end sought ; that reached, crowns our success.

"And so here I give to the teachers, to the instructors, to the educators, the larger part of the praise for the magnificent results secured during the year. From the opening of the Normal School to the close of the school year, they have been earnest in their work, faithful and attentive to their duties."

"In concluding this report, as the President of the Board, I wish to publicly express my sincere thanks to the members for the kindness and courtesy shown me on all occasions during the past year. The assistance rendered me by the members has materially lightened the duties of my office. The Board of Education is entitled to the encouragement and the confidence of the people of Cincinnati.

"We believe that the trust confided to our care has been carefully and judiciously managed and that every act and deed of the Board will bear the closest scrutiny and inspection."

"I again express my appreciation of courtesies shown me by the members of the Board of Education, in whose behalf this report is respectfully submitted."

I shall now relate a few of my Cincinnati class-room experiences, in order to show why I cannot indorse the sentiments expressed by the president.

The most striking peculiarity of the Cincinnati schools exists, in my opinion, in the fact that so much time is devoted to concert recitations, a form of instruction than which there is none so preëminently fitted to deaden the soul and to convert human beings into automatons. These recitations are heard, as a rule, as soon as a District (Primary) School building is entered, and in tones so loud that the uninitiated might readily mistake them for signals of distress.

My experiences of this nature were frequent. In one of the schools I heard upon entering the building sounds unusually shrill coming from one of the class-rooms, and being prompted by my desire to know the true cause of so much commotion, I entered the room from whence they came.

What did I see? Only this: a teacher and about a dozen pupils standing before a blackboard which was covered with lists of words,

spelling the word "Quail" at the top of their voices, and in melodious tones, thus:



When the teacher found occasion to take a moment's rest, she said to me:

"These are my poorest spellers; they always need an extra drilling. *Quail* appears to be a very difficult word for them to remember. I must give them a little more drill upon it."

She then returned to the blackboard and told the children to continue. As a signal for them to start, she pointed with her stick to the letter Q, and after they had begun she swept the stick from left to right along the word "Quail," endeavoring in this manner to keep them in time while they were spelling the word. To keep them in time was, however, no easy matter. They kept together fairly well until they had spelled the word two or three times, but after that their voices became ever more independent, so that soon a regular medley ensued, some calling out the word "Quail," while others had only reached the letter "l," and still others had gone no further than "i."

The "mystery of the strange sounds" was solved.

When the word "Quail" had been earnestly, thoroughly, and conscientiously studied, the word "Market" was begun. Although the spelling of this word was carried on upon the same principles as those which governed the spelling of the word "Quail," nevertheless the monotony was broken, for the reason that both the melody and the tempo were changed. While "Quail" was sung rapidly and with much spirit, "Market" was sung slowly and plaintively, thus:

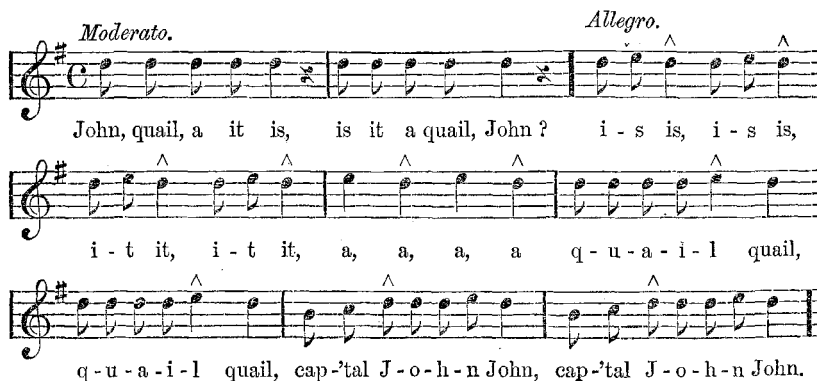


After a few more words had been studied in this manner the teacher said that she would let me hear the whole class read.

The sentence, "Is it a quail, John?" had previously been written upon another blackboard, and the teacher asked the children to read it together.

"Read it backward first," she said.

The children then read the words as the teacher pointed to them with her *baton*, and after they had read the sentence backward and forward, they spelled all the words contained in it. The teacher endeavored to keep them in time by sweeping her stick across each word while the children were spelling it, as she had done in the other case. The effect, as near as I can reproduce it, was as follows:



"You don't spell 'John' very well yet," the teacher now remarked. "Let us try it over again, but don't sing it."

She then spelled the word for the class, immediately, however, falling into the sing-song which she had told the children to avoid. After she had sung it alone two or three times, the voices of the children began to chime in, but she continued to spell with them. While teaching the children to spell the word "John," she adopted a different plan of leading them. She now beat time, and this she did most comically, by bringing her hands (with the backs upward) as near to her shoulders as possible, when she pronounced the word "capital," and thrusting them forcibly forward when she uttered the "J."

"I do have so much trouble in getting these children to recite together," the teacher afterward said to me.

If such teaching represents education upon psychological principles, it is not at all surprising that so many persons should be opposed to modern methods.

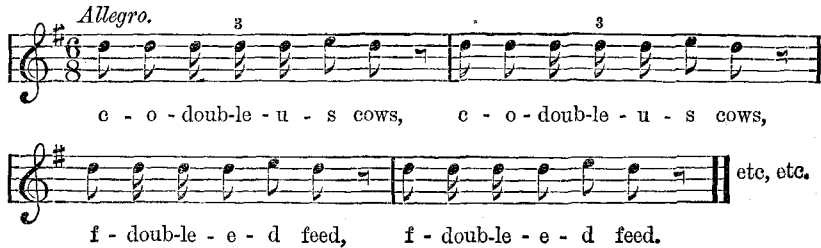
In one of the other classes that I visited in this school, some of the children were reading, while others were writing. After hearing some of them read, the teacher said to me:

"Now I will let one of those engaged in writing read for you. I always like to see whether they can read what they write. They copy

the words from the board, you know, and so I am not always sure that they can read what they write." She then said to one of the children:

"Lucy, read what's on your slate for that *there* gentleman."

Lucy then came forward courageously and read this thrilling tale: "The cows feed on the grass. At night they come to the barn."



It must not be supposed that the above-described method of teaching spelling is confined to this one school. Indeed, my observations led me to believe that this method is commonly used in the schools of Cincinnati.

A reading-lesson that I attended in the third-year class of another school presented some special features, though the method in itself was typical.

The lesson was announced soon after I entered the room. When the children had all placed their books upon the desks, the teacher said:

"Position! Books in your left hands; right hands behind your backs!"

The lesson was conducted as follows: One child was called upon to read a paragraph, then another pupil was told to read the same paragraph over again, and lastly, this paragraph was read by the class in concert. The same course was pursued in all the paragraphs read. Taken all in all, this reading sounded like a piece of music consisting of a solo, an echo, and a chorus. How interesting the story must have been to the children!

In one of the pieces read the word "merchant" appeared.

"What is a merchant?" the teacher inquired after one of the children had read the word.

"A merchant is a tailor," answered one.

"A merchant is a man what keeps dry-goods stores," said another.

"A merchant is a man what buys cheap and kin sell dear," remarked a third.

At last a little boy, with a triumphant air, cried out, "A merchant is a man what sells goods."

The teacher corrected none of these mistakes in language; but when one of the children had read the sentence, "I broke the glass and I will pay for it," the teacher said, "What mistake did he make?"

"Teacher," answered one, "he said 'glass' and he ought a said 'glars.'"

"Right," said the teacher.

It is teaching of this nature that the President of Cincinnati's Board of Education calls magnificent. But what this teaching shows beyond the fact that the teachers are not illiterates it is difficult to perceive.

In searching for the causes of the evils in the Cincinnati public schools we are confronted at the outset with our old acquaintance—scanty supervision, there being but one man to supervise and professionally educate seven hundred teachers, but one person to do the work of half a dozen.

As far as politics are concerned, the schools of Cincinnati are not so obviously involved as those of Baltimore and Buffalo. Until a few years ago, however, the politicians were in possession of the schools; that they abused their power is only too well known in Cincinnati, and it cannot be doubted that the old Board is responsible for many of the evils found in the schools of that city to-day. The power to appoint teachers, which is now in the hands of the superintendent, was then in the hands of the members of the Board, and during the reign of the politicians many incompetent teachers were brought into the schools. As Cincinnati has an exceptionally stable corps of teachers, not more than five or six per cent of changes occurring annually, the vast majority of those appointed years ago are still in the schools. This circumstance may, in large part, account for the fact that although during the past few years scarcely any but graduates of the Cincinnati Normal School have been appointed, the corps of teachers on the whole is still so obviously lacking in professional qualification.

But, after all, to fix the responsibility for the evils is of much less importance than to remedy them. As the most flagrant evils found in the schools of Cincinnati are due to the professional incompetency of the teachers, the chief remedy for Cincinnati's school evils lies in rendering the teachers competent by giving them a professional education. To educate them thoroughly, Cincinnati, as Buffalo, would require a supervisory staff consisting of five or six educational experts.

J. M. RICE.

ENGLISH VIEWS OF THE McKINLEY TARIFF.

To criticise the commercial policy of another country is in general as useless as it is ungracious. If the two countries are at one in their policy, it is needless; if they are at variance, any criticism will be regarded with suspicion. It is the honest creed of free-traders that absolute freedom of exchange between any two countries is good for both, and that if one of them sets up a fixed barrier against the other it may injure both, but will injure itself the more. But to preach this doctrine where it is not accepted leads to irritation rather than to conviction; and where it is preached with a conscious air of superior wisdom human nature recalcitrates. English apostles of free trade have done serious injury to their own cause by presuming to teach other nations, and have given to interested opponents the opportunity for imputations not the less telling because they are wholly unfounded. The poor Cobden Club, which has difficulty in scraping together subscriptions sufficient to pay for the issue of its publications and which has even given up the expense of its annual dinner, is credited with the expenditure of millions in order to bribe foreigners to buy English goods; and perfidious Albion is supposed to be intriguing for the ruin of foreign industries, when she is only doing her best to promote those industries by facilitating the exchange of their products and of her own. It is, therefore, not without reluctance that, being a convinced free-trader of old standing and a hearty well-wisher of the closer union of the two great branches of the English-speaking race, I have consented, on the special request of the editor of the FORUM, to try to put on paper in a form suitable to Americans a faint reflection of some of the thoughts current in Great Britain on the present controversy concerning commercial policy in the United States.

There can be no doubt that the first result of the McKinley tariff legislation was to create a disagreeable feeling toward the United States, both in this country and in Europe generally. It dazzled both the friends and foes of protection. It frightened foreign protectionist countries in Europe and British protectionist colonies into very odd and angry recrimination against a policy which was virtually their